



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
INSTALLATIONS AND ENVIRONMENT
110 ARMY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20310-0110

AUG 12 2009

The Honorable Mark R. Warner
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jim Webb
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James P. Moran
United States House Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Warner and Webb and Congressman Moran:

Thank you for your letter of July 15, 2009, concerning the Department of Defense's (DoD) plans to construct an on-site Remote Inspection Facility (RIF) as a part of the Base Realignment And Closure Recommendation (BRAC) 133 Project located at the Mark Center in Alexandria, Virginia. The on-site RIF is an important component of the project, critical to the long term operational efficiency and effectiveness of the BRAC 133 facility. We understand the sensitivities surrounding this issue and in response to your request we have completed a comprehensive and fully coordinated relook of our position within DoD. The following information will explain DoD's position as confirmed by this review.

A RIF is an integral anti-terrorism/force protection (AT/FP) component of any DoD installation or stand-alone facility project constructed under DoD's current Unified Facilities Criteria. A RIF allows for the inspection of trucks and other vehicles for explosives and other potentially hazardous substances before these vehicles are allowed to approach a primary facility. A RIF is ideally located at a distance that is sufficiently removed from a primary facility such that the detonation or release of a substance from a vehicle under inspection would not pose an unacceptable level of risk to the facility or its occupants. The location of the RIF for the Mark Center Project was selected by applying these criteria to the approximate 16 acre site on which the project is being built.

A RIF, in and of itself, is considered to have a deterrent effect on potential aggressors against DoD facilities. It is a visible component of the many security measures built into these projects and makes clear to potential threats that their vehicle will be inspected prior to entering a facility. Other measures are designed into these projects to reduce the risk of threats that might attempt to circumvent the inspection process. We believe that the absence of an onsite RIF potentially makes a facility a more inviting target for potential aggressors by giving the perception that the site can be more readily penetrated. Conversely, we believe the mere presence of the RIF deters potential aggressors and, as explained below, greatly reduces the threat to the Mark Center facility and its neighbors posed by an actual attack.

Relocating the Mark Center RIF would not make the Mark Center or its neighbors safer. Vehicles can still try to infiltrate the site or detonate a device just outside the secure perimeter regardless of whether the RIF is on-site or not. It is virtually impossible to reduce all risk associated with possible aggressor attacks. AT/FP measures are designed to reduce risk, but some measure of risk will always be present.

Relocating the RIF off-site would require constructing a facility elsewhere within a reasonable distance. It also significantly complicates AT/FP measures because procedures must be in place to reduce the risk of pre-screened vehicles being compromised between the relocated RIF and the Mark Center. Pre-screened vehicles arriving at the BRAC site would still have to be checked to ensure that they had the appropriate seals or pre-screening documentation and that they met the "RIF-to-site" time parameters or travel procedures to the site. Vehicles that were not pre-screened or failed the time/travel process from the offsite RIF would be turned away. In either case, all vehicles attempting to enter the facility must still be stopped and checked even if the RIF is not on site.

With respect to the potential effects of a detonation of an explosive device in or near the Mark Center RIF, we recently concluded an analysis that focused on the building immediately adjacent to the planned location of the RIF. This building is the most proximate to the RIF at a distance of approximately 160 feet. We would note that this distance exceeds the 148 feet DoD Unified Facilities Criteria minimum stand-off distance required for standard building construction. However, based on our analysis and in an effort to further mitigate the potential effects of the RIF in the area, we have incorporated several design changes. These changes include lowering its elevation, hardening the structure by adding a reinforced concrete roof and west wall (wall facing the adjacent structure), placing earthen berms along appropriate sections of the walls and adding a green roof to the structure. These changes are designed to allow blast pressures to escape in directions away from any nearby facilities and to render the RIF visually unobtrusive to the community.

We would point out that the buildings closest to the RIF, also office buildings in the Mark Center, are approximately 440 and 960 feet away, respectively. The closest residential property is the Southern Towers Apartment Complex. It is approximately 750 feet away from the Mark Center and on the opposite side of Seminary Road. The Hilton Hotel is approximately 890 feet away. These distances all greatly exceed the 148 feet DoD Unified Facilities Criteria minimum stand-off distance required for standard building construction. An aerial photograph highlighting the distances between these structures is attached.

It may also be helpful to know that the Pentagon RIF has been operating for more than five years without the occurrence of an incident that has been disruptive to the surrounding community or the adjacent transportation network. Utilizing the Pentagon RIF for the Mark Center project; however, is not practical based on:

1. the cost to expand Pentagon RIF

2. limited space at the Pentagon
3. time between the Pentagon and Mark Center

The Pentagon maintains a robust emergency preparedness plan that is fully coordinated with the surrounding local jurisdictions. Similar plans will be in place for the Mark Center facility in full coordination with the surrounding jurisdictions. These discussions recently have been initiated.

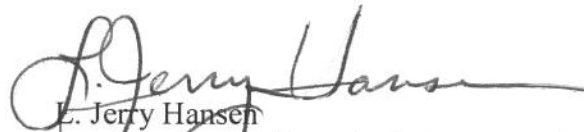
We have consulted with the Director of Facilities for both the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and the Office of Naval Research to confirm the circumstances and procedures of those agencies with respect to the inspection of deliveries to their facilities. Both agencies have advised that they do not use an off-site RIF for any of their buildings, current or pending; rather, deliveries are made directly to their loading docks and inspected there. The Mark Center facility will be orders of magnitude larger than these facilities and will be second only to the Pentagon in terms of size of the DoD employee population, diversity of missions being conducted and volume of deliveries. In order to ensure a safe working environment for the employees as contemplated by BRAC law and DoD's Unified Facilities Criteria, DoD leadership has determined that deliveries directly to the loading dock without pre-screening at a RIF is not acceptable for operation of the Mark Center facility.

Finally, we do not believe that the planned location of the RIF will preclude the addition of a possible direct access connection from I-395 to the Mark Center. We understand the merits and strongly support the idea of direct access to I-395. We are working closely with VDOT to ensure they understand and take into account our security and force protection issues as they develop and analyze alternatives.

Once again, we understand the neighborhood and City of Alexandria's concerns relative to the RIF. We have previously explained to various neighborhoods and their representatives our position on the operational necessity for the RIF and why we believe it does not pose a significant risk to the community. Finally, we believe the construction of the Mark Center RIF may actually reduce the risk of an attack taking place.

I hope that this additional information is helpful in understanding of our position. I am available to discuss this issue with you at your convenience if you so desire.

Sincerely,



L. Jerry Hansen
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Strategic Infrastructure)
And Senior Official Performing the Duties of
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Installations and Environment)